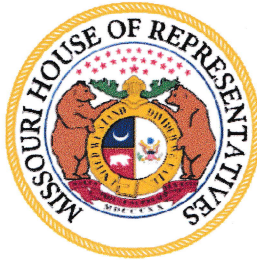


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**MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES****ROBERT ROSS**

State Representative  
District 142

**Testimony of Robert Ross, State Representative – District 142, Missouri House of Representatives  
Before the U.S. House of Representatives  
Subcommittee on Public Land and Environmental Regulation  
June 10, 2014**

Testimony – Statement by Robert Ross in support of HR 4182 To provide that the Ozark National Scenic Riverways shall be administered in accordance with the general management plan for that unit of the National Park System, and for other purposes.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to voice some of my thoughts and concerns regarding the management of Missouri's Ozark National Scenic Riverways.

As the state representative for the 142nd legislative district, I represent approximately 37,000 Missourians, many of whom have their lives and livelihoods directly dependent on the continued success and accessibility of the natural treasures that are the Current and Jacks Fork Rivers. It should go without saying that these waterways are an integral part of our culture and a vital part of our economy, and that the people I am blessed to serve feel very strongly about protecting and preserving this important part of our history and our future.

It is my contention that our scenic riverways must be protected but also managed in a way that will allow for proper stewardship that does not infringe on the rights of Missourians and visitors who wish to enjoy them. For decades now this has not been an issue as my constituents, as well as visitors from all around the state and the world, have camped, boated, hunted, fished and, in general, enjoyed the abundance of activities that are available along these waterways. It is this responsible use of the land that we want to continue.

However, given the latest actions of the National Park Service, it has become quite clear that the goal is to limit access to these natural treasures, which is a decision that will have catastrophic effects on the lives of my constituents, as well as on our local economies. In particular, we have grave concerns with the National Park Service's preferred "Alternative B". This particular plan will lead to increased restrictions on access and the outright elimination of recreational activities in vast portions along the riverways.

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The people of Missouri are far more supportive of what is commonly referred to as the “No Action Alternative”. We believe this management plan will allow users to responsibly experience this area that we agree is special, which was the central idea shared by property owners, the State of Missouri, and the NPS when the ONSR was created. It is this option that we believe is consistent with the way the park has been successfully managed for decades, and that will give us the best opportunity moving forward to protect and preserve this natural treasure without disrupting the way of life for thousands of Missourians.

I feel it is important to note at this time that my colleagues in the Missouri General Assembly moved in overwhelming numbers this year to support this “No Action Alternative”. We approved both SCR 22 and HCR 9 in both the House and Senate this year. These resolutions not only encourage the adoption of the “No Action Alternative”, but also encourage Congress to explore the option of returning control of the park to the State of Missouri. As the resolutions read, we believe “Missouri citizens most impacted in their daily lives are in the best position to formulate policy and regulations to manage and protect Missouri's natural resources as opposed to a federal agency headquartered in Washington, D.C.”

Furthermore, HR 4182 goes beyond simply ensuring that the current general management plan does not become more restrictive, it provides specific protections for recreational activities that have historically been performed within the park, including riding horses and using boats with motors. It seems beyond reason, but the Park Service's proposed alternative for management would close 65 miles of horse trails that are currently in use, and ban motorized vessels from areas of the river where they are currently allowed.

In conclusion, we urge you to honor the original spirit of the agreement that was made when the Ozark National Scenic Riverways were first created. That means allowing Missourians to responsibly use and enjoy these waterways while also preserving and protecting their natural beauty so that they can be enjoyed by future generations as well. For decades we have been successful in this endeavor and we believe we can continue this success in the years to come without the need for overly burdensome regulations handed down by the National Park Service.

Thank you for your consideration. I will do my best to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



**Representative Robert Ross**

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Texas, Howell, Phelps, & Pulaski Counties  
Missouri House of Representatives